DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 041 604 LI 001 895

TITLE	The Federal Library Mission, A Statement of Principles and Guidelines.
INSTITUTION	Federal Library Committee, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	Oct 66
NOTE	11p.
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF-$0.25 HC-$0.65
DESCRIPTORS	*Government Libraries, Information Dissemination, Information Needs, *Library Programs, *Library Services, Library Technical Processes, Management, *National Libraries, Organization, *Use Studies
IDENTIFIERS	Federal Library Committee, *Federal Library Mission

ABSTRACT

To achieve their mission, Federal libraries have at least four basic responsibilities: (1) to collect and organize pertinent recorded information, in whatever form required, to meet managerial, research, educational, informational and other program responsibilities; (2) to provide ready access to their materials and to assist users in locating required information; (3) to disseminate pertinent information from their collections on a selective basis and (4) to make their collections and services known to present and potential users. The guidelines given for adequate Federal library service are arranged in three closely related categories: (1) organization and management, (2) library resources and (3) library services. In addition to these services, each agency should define the extent of library service it is willing to provide to other agencies as part of a cooperative network of Federal library resources. (NH)

ED 041604

THE FEDERAL LIBRARY MISSION

A Statement of Principles and Guidelines

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LI 001895

THE FEDERAL LIBRARY COMMITTEE. WASHINGTON: OCTOBER 1966.

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PREFACE

The Federal Library Committee is an inter-agency committee established under the auspices of the Bureau of the Budget and the Library of Congress.[1] Its membership consists of representatives of the cabinet departments and six independent agencies, the latter selected for two year terms on a rotating basis. The Committee was organized to:

> (1) consider policies and problems relating to Federal libraries; (2) evaluate existing Federal library programs and resources; (3) determine the priorities among library issues requiring attention; (4) examine the organization and policies for acquiring, preserving, and making information available; (5) study the need for and potential of technological innovation in library practices; (6) study library budgeting and staffing problems including the recruiting, education, training, and remuneration of librarians.

In considering its responsibilities the Committee has concluded that immediate priority must be given to establishing a common understanding of the role of Federal libraries among the Government's information services so as to insure full utilization of library resources. Therefore, the Committee has formulated this statement of mission and guidelines for its implementation.

The Committee plans subsequent statements on specific library operations and services with a view to raising the general level of Federal library performance.

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1 The Federal Register, 30:8557 (July 3, 1965).

INTRODUCTION

All Federal agencies require information to operate effectively. Managerial decisions and professional expertise necessary to successful accomplishment of agency missions depend on an informed staff. The increased complexity of Government, the accelerated growth of knowledge, and the explosion of documentation have focused attention on the need to increase effectiveness of all mechanisms providing information services to Federal agencies among which Federal libraries are of special importance.

The most urgent library problem confronting Federal agencies is identical with that confronting non-Federal institutions, i.e., the problem of providing library service adequate to meet urgent growing demands. The gravity of this problem was recognized by the President when on September 2, 1966 he issued Executive Order No. 11301, creating a National Advisory Commission on Libraries to "evaluate policies, programs, and practices," affecting the nation's libraries.

The key elements of the problem include:

1. A staggering increase in production of information accompanied by an overwhelming demand for access to all types of information;

2. The growing complexity of our civilization, the increasing educational level of our population, and its changing cultural characteristics which have created and will continue to create new and heavier demands upon Government and upon educational and research institutions such as libraries;

3. Cumulative deficiencies in library resources, staff, and services which are not equal to present and anticipated demands;

4. The development of new data processing techniques which are revolutionizing information handling and are placing new pressures on libraries.

Essential to the solution of this urgent problem is a clear understanding within Federal agencies of (1) the services Federal libraries can provide to support missions of their agencies, and (2) the resources the libraries must have to develop those services. The statement of library mission that follows and the appended guidelines are a basis for attacking the problem.

THE FEDERAL LIBRARY MISSION

1. DEFINITION AND SCOPE

Federal libraries support the missions and programs of their agencies principally by providing bibliographically related information services. To achieve this objective they have at least four basic responsibilities.

a. To collect and organize pertinent recorded information, in whatever form required, to meet managerial, research, educational, informational, and other program responsibilities;

b. To provide ready access to their materials and to assist users in locating required information;

c. To disseminate pertinent information from their collections on a selective basis;

d. To make their collections and services known to present and potential users.

2. LIBRARY FUNCTIONS

To discharge these basic responsibilities, Federal libraries perform a range of tasks including assistance to users through literature searching, reference service, bibliographic work, professional guidance to readers, lending and borrowing materials, and by supporting these services through selecting, acquiring, cataloging, indexing, and abstracting pertinent materials. The effective performance of these functions requires continuing appraisal of the information needs of the agency.

3. RELATION TO FEDERAL COMMUNITY

The collections of Federal libraries constitute an important resource for providing information needed in daily operation of the Government, and in the conduct of agency research programs. Interlibrary lending, inter-agency reference assistance, cooperative cataloging, literature searching, and other forms of cooperation are essential to full and efficient use of this resource.

4. RELATION TO RESEARCH COMMUNITY AND THE GENERAL PUBLIC

Increasingly, a community of interest has developed among Federal and non-Federal library users. Federal libraries support those missions of their agencies that relate to non-Governmental groups by extending their library services to other libraries, research institutions, and the general public.

GUIDELINES

For Adequate Federal Library Service

Government agencies* require library services fully responsive to their research and other information needs. This can only be achieved through increased administrative attention, guidance, and support. Agency management should see that its library managerial policies are consistent with the foregoing statement of the Federal Library Mission. The Guidelines which follow provide Government agencies a means for strengthening their library management, resources, and services. Implementation of these guidelines demands intensive program planning and development.

The Guidelines are arranged in three closely related categories: Organization and Management; Library Resources; and Library Services.

A. ORGANIZATION AND MANAGEMENT

Sound organizational and management practices are necessary to insure that agency libraries provide adequate service, responsive to agency needs. Basic to the effectiveness of these practices, however, are full communication and understanding of program goals, a competent library staff, and adequate administrative support for library improvement.

The following practices are recommended:

1. Each agency should formulate a written policy stating its library's mission and its place in the organizational structure. This should be reviewed at regular intervals or at least not less than every five years.

   a. Each Federal library should maintain current operation manuals that explain the agency's mission to the library staff and that establish procedures to serve that mission.

   b. To insure responsiveness to user needs, each agency should locate its library or libraries organizationally where they can maintain most effective communication with agency program and planning officials.

2. Each agency should see that its library program is professionally administered and that the library staff is sufficient in number and adequately trained to fulfill library responsibilities.

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* The word agency is used to cover not only separately organized units of the Federal Government, but also where appropriate, subordinate units thereof. The word library is used to cover not only a department library, but a library system, or libraries serving subordinate units.

3. Agencies should budget for library needs in the same manner as for the needs of other professional services which support agency missions. In doing so, the following factors should be considered:

   a. The full range of services the library must provide in support of the agency mission;

   b. Increased effectiveness of agency management and professional activity to be achieved by using the specialized services provided by the library;

   c. The extent and nature of specialized agency research activities requiring library services;

   d. The range of subject areas the library must cover to fulfill its mission;

   e. The availability of other pertinent information resources and the expenditures required to exploit them in support of the agency mission.

4. The agency should require pertinent reports from its libraries including up-to-date statistical records of library operations, services, and resources upon which sound management and policy decisions can be made. The libraries should make such reports compatible with other library reporting practices currently being developed by the Office of Education.

B. LIBRARY RESOURCES

Basic physical resources of a library consist of recorded information such as, but not limited to: books, documents, periodicals, serials, technical reports, dissertations, pamphlets, manuscripts, films, micro texts, slides, audio discs or tapes, computer tapes, maps and photos, and the necessary related equipment.

The following guidelines are designed to assure that Government libraries have adequate resources organized for optimum accessibility.

1. The agency should require its library to provide, in sufficient quantity, those resources necessary to carry out the agency's mission. In addition to reference materials, these resources should include the indexes and bibliographic tools required to identify pertinent literature available in other libraries.

2. The agency should require from its libraries a carefully developed, written acquisition policy based upon the agency's mission and related library responsibility. The policy should include scope, coverage, and retention guidelines.

3. Each library should develop a policy statement governing the organization of its resources by means of cataloging, indexing, abstracting, and other bibliographic procedures which may include use of machine techniques. The statement should define the scope, coverage, and form of the catalog and its relation to other pertinent bibliographic tools. The agency should require its library to cooperate in, and make the fullest practical use of, centralized cataloging and indexing services.

C. LIBRARY SERVICES

Library services comprise those which involve knowledge of, and interpretation and exploitation of, the collections and their bibliographic apparatus and those which involve lending materials, directional assistance, and record keeping. Where the services enumerated below are not provided, the agency, with assistance from its library, should re-examine the library program in relation to current information needs, and develop a modern program of library services including:

1. Providing factual information responsive to specific inquiries, including when appropriate, the selection and synthesis of information from various sources and directing the inquirers' attention to related information beyond the immediate scope of the query;

2. Providing an organized program for selective dissemination of information based on systematic analysis of agency and staff information needs through interest profiles and program analysis;

3. Compiling comprehensive or selective bibliographies selected for specific purposes and produced either on the initiative of the library or upon request. Such bibliographies may be current or retrospective and should, when appropriate, include annotations or abstracts;

4. Performing literature searches for the purpose of documenting and producing state-of-the-art reviews;

5. Providing professional guidance to readers in the use of library collections and bibliographic resources, and acquainting them with other information sources such as individual subject specialists, information centers, and research organizations;

6. Lending library materials or photo-copying when appropriate;

7. Borrowing, for official use, materials from other Federal or private libraries;

8. Systematically providing information about agency library resources, services, and programs to encourage maximum use of these facilities.

In addition to these services, each agency should define the extent of library service it is willing to provide to other agencies as part of a cooperative network of Federal library resources.